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Message from the Mayor

In recent weeks, we've made important progress in public safety. Our Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) has reached 3,800 sworn officers, and we're continuing to reduce homicides and other crimes in our city. Public safety, however, is not just about sworn officers or statistics—it's about getting public safety professionals to you when you need them.

In 1999, I pledged that the District government would do a better job of answering 911 calls and dispatching police, fire and emergency medical services. Over the years, we have worked hard to achieve that goal. As part of the Y2K upgrade, we installed new systems—including a new Computer-Aided Dispatch System—and upgraded others.

In January 2000, we launched 311 as our police non-emergency number—providing residents with an easy-to-remember, toll-free alternative for contacting the police in non-emergencies. In July 2001, we opened the Public Safety Communications Center (PSCC) on McMillan Drive, NW. In addition to taking advantage of new technology, the PSCC co-located police and fire communications personnel in a single facility to increase coordination and efficiency.

With the support of the Council, we hired dozens of new civilian call-takers, reaching our authorized levels for the first time in many years. We broke ground on a new, state-of-the-art Unified Communications Center on the St. Elizabeths campus east of the river. This new center will incorporate the latest communications technology and provide even greater coordination among the District's call-answering functions.

Now, I am pleased to announce another important milestone in the ongoing improvements to our emergency communications capability in DC: the creation of the new Office of Unified Communications (OUC). Starting October 1, all civilian call-takers and dispatchers in MPD and Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS) were officially transferred from their respective agencies to the new OUC.

Under the leadership of Michael Latessa, the OUC is responsible for all emergency and police non-emergency communications in the District. The OUC is also assuming responsibility for the Mayor's Call Center. This move is designed to further streamline and coordinate our call-taking and dispatch functions, establish one clear chain-of-command, and ensure even higher quality service for our customers.

Mike Latessa has been on board for several months, working on the transition with Communications personnel from the MPD and FEMS. During that time, we have already seen significant improvements in performance.

Last month, for example, 94 percent of the 911 calls to the PSCC were answered within 5 seconds—many were answered without the caller ever hearing a ring. A year ago, the percentage of 911 calls answered within 5 seconds was barely above 75 percent.

The percentage of 311 calls answered within 11 seconds has also risen—from about 74 percent a year ago to 90 percent last month. These improvements in call-answering have occurred even though call volumes have remained fairly steady.

Another performance measure we use is the percentage of calls abandoned by the caller—in many cases, hang-ups from people who feel frustrated over having to wait for an answer. A year ago, more than 10 percent of the 911 calls were abandoned. Last month, the figure was about 3 percent—another sign of progress.

Let me applaud all of the former MPD and FEMS employees and managers who have driven these dramatic improvements in our 911 and 311 services. In particular, I appreciate the work of MPD Inspector James Crane and FEMS Deputy Chief for Communications John Clayton, as well as former deputy mayor Margret Kellems.

We can—and we will—make further improvements in call-answering, radio communications and public safety. The opening of the new Unified Communications Center, scheduled for December 2005, will be a major step forward.



DCRA Tackles Safety Issues in the District

As many of you know, Georgetown University student Daniel Rigby died in a horrific fire on the morning of October 17 on Prospect Street, NW. His death prompted a week of inspections, which began on October 19. In the wake of the fire, city inspectors noticed an excessive accumulation of combustibles. Exit doors were inaccessible from the side of the building where the fire took place. Our inspectors discovered that fire doors were obstructed or blocked and that fire extinguishers were not charged.

David Clark, director of the District's Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), last week announced a comprehensive outreach plan to educate area college students and others on the District's health and safety codes for housing. This outreach effort is an important opportunity for our government to ensure that all of our city's codes are followed in order to protect our residents.

Last week, DCRA inspectors continued inspections of Georgetown properties near the university. The inspections resulted in the complete closure of 3314 Prospect Street, NW, and the evacuation of five students. As of late last week, approximately 38 students had been relocated with the assistance of university officials.

Agency inspectors were able to successfully access 33 of the 93 properties targeted on October 19, 2004. This initial inspection resulted in the closure of six properties with numerous life threatening violations and the immediate removal of the tenants. Additionally, nearly 150 housing and building code violations were found.

Also last week, DCRA Director Clark and Battalion Chief Palmer of DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS) addressed Georgetown students and university officials. Clark promised that a "cross enforcement" team of inspectors from DCRA and FEMS would conduct expedited inspections for fire and building code violations.

Clark said outreach, education and inspections of student rental properties already in the works have been accelerated by the tragic fire in Georgetown. Our city government, through DCRA, is committed to facilitating sound business practices and safe development through ensuring adherence with the District's building and housing codes as well as business licensing requirements.

Students interested in having DCRA inspect their homes should contact DCRA at (202) 442-4400 for assistance.

Community Profile Joanna Bengel

Joanna Bengel, a Ward 5 resident, dedicated a year to serving as an AmeriCorps member working with adults, children, and families of the Edgewood Terrace community. She helped District residents earn their GEDs and played a significant role in planning both National Youth Service Day and All Corps Service Day.

Working through the Community Preservation and Development Corporation, Joanna was responsible for the planning and implementation of a GED curriculum for 25 students, ages 16-24. She also helped advocate and secure human service resources for the students.

During National Youth Service Day, the largest volunteer event in the city, Joanna gathered families of the Edgewood Terrace community to design and plant a garden in the housing development. Joanna led a team of volunteers planting flowers, vegetables and herbs that families could use for their own meals. She was also a member of the Youth Service Task Force for National Youth Service Day and helped plan the opening ceremony for the service weekend at the City Museum.

Through the InterCorps Council, Joanna worked with other AmeriCorps members across the District of Columbia to plan All Corps Service Day. She led volunteers and AmeriCorps members to help renovate Brookland Elementary School for the service event, which was held in collaboration with Hands on DC.

"I continue to be impressed by Joanna's commitment to service and leadership demonstrated each time I am with her," said Frances Dugan, site director for Notre Dame Mission Volunteers AmeriCorps Program.

Joanna is the July youth winner of the Mayor's Community Service Award, sponsored by Serve DC. If you would like to nominate a youth or adult for the monthly award, visit www.serve.dc.gov for nomination information, or call (202) 727-7925.



Baseball Discussed at Penn-Branch Community Meeting

On October 10, I attended the Penn-Branch Civic Association meeting to give members and community leaders an overview of the positive impact the return of Major League Baseball will have on the District after a 33-year absence. This is an exciting time for our city. It's my hope that all of our residents will come to understand the benefits this sport will bring to the nation's capital.

I went to the meeting to tell residents why I want to bring baseball back to DC. I wanted to engage them, listen to them and have a dialogue with them about our plan.

When residents hear the facts, I believe they appreciate that everyone in the community can benefit economically from a team and a stadium. Baseball is about community. It's for our families and our kids. My plan to bring baseball back to the District ties into my vision for transforming sports and recreation across the city.

For each baseball game, we'll make hundreds of tickets available for low-income residents. For every ticket sold above 2.5 million annually, the Sports and Entertainment Commission gets \$1 for improving youth facilities and opportunities across the city. We must consider the positive economic impact that a team will have on our city. Do you remember what Seventh Street looked like before the MCI Center? Have you seen what it looks like now? The ballpark can have the same impact along the Anacostia Waterfront—creating 3,500 construction jobs and \$15 million in direct annual revenue for the city.

But not one dime of the money for this ballpark will come from the tax dollars of DC residents. Money that you expect to fund schools, rec centers and street repairs will continue to do just that.

We're funding the new ballpark in three ways:

- An annual lease paid by the team owners
- Ballpark taxes on tickets, parking, concessions and merchandise
- A special ballpark fee that will be paid only by DC's largest businesses—those with gross receipts over \$3 million a year

So it's team owners, business owners and stadium users who are paying for this, not DC residents. To be ready for Opening Day, we need to move forward—but we want your input and we'll seek it actively.

Breast Cancer and SIDS Awareness Month

Few things are more important in the District than the health of our residents. Last week I joined health officials to deliver two proclamations declaring October *Breast Cancer Awareness Month* and *SIDS Awareness Month* to call attention to these serious health issues in DC.

The District of Columbia has the highest breast cancer rate in the nation. This year alone, some 590 women in the District will be diagnosed with breast cancer. That number is unacceptable, and we must work harder to reverse that trend.

Officials at the DC Department of Health are engaged in very aggressive outreach to ensure that all uninsured and under-insured women receive breast cancer screening and information, and that all insured women of the appropriate age seek screenings through their health care providers.

There is another very important health issue facing the children of our city—Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS. I'm happy to say that the District will be part of an innovative education campaign to help enlighten our residents about the risk of SIDS.

Sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Back to Sleep campaign has seen the rate of SIDS in the US decrease by about 50 percent over the last 10 years. However, the rate of SIDS in the African-American community is still twice as high as in the white community. Clearly, there is more work to be done!

We have a special responsibility to help educate parents, grandparents and caregivers about the increased risk of SIDS and help them do everything they can to prevent it.

In recognition of the 10th anniversary of the Back to Sleep Campaign and its special efforts to educate African-Americans in our city about SIDS risk prevention, I presented Dr. Yvonne Maddox from NIH with the proclamation recognizing October 2004 as SIDS Awareness Month in Washington, DC.



Connected Communities: Prince George's and the District

A few years ago, I met with Jack Johnson, County Executive for Prince George's County, to discuss issues of mutual interest to District and Prince George's County residents. By sharing the same border, we would also share similar social and economic challenges. On October 4, I was joined by Johnson and other elected officials to announce three initiatives that will improve the quality of life for residents who live on the border of our two jurisdictions. The initiatives, called "Connected Communities," include efficient administration of health care, beautification and transportation, and public safety.

We announced, for example, a regional task force that will look for ways that the four hospitals on the border—Fort Washington Hospital, Prince George's Hospital Center, Greater Southeast Hospital and Providence Hospital—can better care for DC and Prince George's residents.

To date Prince George's County has spent approximately \$1.2 million on Connected Communities roadway rehabilitation projects in the vicinity of Eastern and Southern Avenues. The District of Columbia spent approximately \$15 million in fiscal year 2004 on roadway improvements in that area.

The Connected Communities partnership is also addressing litter, abandoned autos, vacant properties, and disorderly behavior—all conditions that negatively affect residents' quality of life.

By focusing resources on improving these conditions along Southern and Eastern Avenues, we can create more sustainable and vibrant neighborhoods in the District and in Prince George's County. I am confident that these initiatives will strengthen our efforts to meet the expectations and the needs of the community.

District Activities



Mayor Williams and Councilmember Jack Evans were greeted at the Beijing Capital International Airport October 15 by Madam Tian Yan, Deputy Director-General of Beijing Foreign Affairs Office, at the beginning of a 10-day mission to Asia to further sister city agreements in Beijing and Bangkok.



The DC delegation to Asia met with Beijing Deputy Mayor Zhang Mao and other officials on October 18.



Mayor Williams viewed a model of the Yizhuang Economic and Technical Development Zone October 19 in Beijing.



In Shanghai October 20, the Mayor met with the Mayor of Shanghai, Han Zhang, at the Municipal Government Hall. Later, the delegation visited a city planning exhibit that included a scale model of Shanghai.



Community News

- [Mayor Receives 2004 Public Service Award from Harvard Club](#)
- [DC Launches Program To Ease Rush Hour Traffic Flow and Downtown Congestion](#)
- [Employment Service Agency Commended for Outreach to Bilingual Community](#)

[View All News Releases](#)

Upcoming Events

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| 10/31 | Marine Corps Marathon: "The People's Marathon" 8:30 am – 3:30 pm Marine Corps War Memorial, Arlington, Virginia Marine Corps Marathon (http://www.marinemarathon.com) |
| 11/2 | General Election 7 am – 8 pm Polling Places Board of Elections and Ethics (http://www.dcboee.org/) |
| 11/6, 11/9, 11/10, 11/13 | Wards 7 and 8 Community Emergency Exercises Various Times and Locations Contact: Kim McCall, (202) 673-7695 DC Emergency Management Agency (http://dcema.dc.gov) |

